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A NEW COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH<sup>1</sup>

The wealth of the Book of Isaiah will tax commentators until we have a true picture of the life and times of the centuries out of which the work grew. Every student of that unique character will welcome Gray's contribution in the "International Critical Commentary" series. The complete work will require two volumes to be prepared by G. B. Gray and A. S. Peake. The Introduction to the whole book and the commentary on chaps. 1-27 already occupy 573 pages of the available space, or one volume. The second volume will therefore contain chaps. 28-66, Gray being responsible for chaps. 28-39, while Peake will prepare chaps. 40-66.

The Introduction surveys the questions which must enter into any such treatment of the book as the "International Critical Commentary" requires. In the discussion of the Greek version and the prophetic canon, Gray reaches the conclusion that "both in extent and arrangement, the present Hebrew Text and the Greek Version of the Book of Isaiah are substantially identical" (p. xi)—a very comfortable decision for the textual student. The next conclusion is that at the date when the Greek version was made, the Book of Isaiah had already reached its present form and also, with slight differences, its present extent (p. xl). The question then emerges as to when the Greek version of Isaiah was produced. Gray concludes that it probably existed very soon after 150 B.C. (p. xlii), if not even earlier.

Gray's outlines of Isaiah are substantially those given in other commentaries. Three sections are referred to by separate titles: (1) chap. 1; (2) chaps. 2-12; (3) chaps. 13-23. The anonymous prophecy, chaps. 24-27, is followed by a collection of poems, chaps. 28-33, beginning with "woe" (*hōy*), and these by a small section, chaps. 34, 35, difficult to explain either as an interpolation or as related to the preceding chapters.

After summarizing his analysis of the work he says (p. lvii): "We may immediately set aside chaps. 40-66, 24-27, 34 f. as containing no words of Isaiah." Even in chaps. 1-23, we must be careful to distinguish between the work of Isaiah and that of a later date. "The Book of Isaiah is a late compilation: even the books incorporated in it and

<sup>1</sup> *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah*. Chaps. 1-39 by George Buchanan Gray, and chaps. 40-66 by Arthur S. Peake. In two vols.: Vol. I, Introduction and Commentary on chaps. 1-27. New York: Scribner, 1912. Pp. ci+472. \$3.00 net.

attributed to Isaiah—chaps. 2-12 and 13-23—are post-exilic works” (p. lxii). The criteria to be used for determining the different writers and the date of any particular passage are mainly of three kinds: (1) political and social implications; (2) style and language; (3) ideas. “In most cases a final judgment on any passage will rest in some measure on criteria of all three classes” (p. lix).

In his survey of the poetical forms of prophetic literature, Gray takes a very sane position, that there is considerable uncertainty or irregularity in Hebrew rhythms or meter. It is rarely wise to insist on any textual emendation simply on rhythmical grounds. This same kind of caution is apparent in all his textual work.

The political and social conditions of Isaiah’s age are surveyed with a fine candor, and a sifting out of the elements which are too hypothetical to challenge the credence of careful students. In the chronological table we note that he gives Hezekiah the dates of 727-698, with the later date in common type in parenthesis.

The body of the Commentary is rich with such textual notes and literary references as mark the author’s careful work on Numbers in this same series. Lack of space will forbid our presenting specimens of the complete method adopted in the exegesis proper. Significant, however, are his views on the dates of the messianic prophecies which are found in this portion of Isaiah. The “royal son” passage in 9:1-6 he locates as does Marti “roughly about 500, not far remote in time from Haggai and Zechariah, both of whom expected a Messiah of the Davidic house” (p. 168). Isa. 11:1-8 was written after 586 B.C., possibly toward the end of the exile, when men’s minds had been placing high hopes on Zerubbabel, of the stock of Jesse, who seems to have drawn men’s attention to himself (p. 214). One more view will be mentioned. The puzzling chaps. 24-27 are said to be “a work of the post-exilic period” (p. 410), and the style of songs and prophecy alike point to “a late post-exilic period” (p. 402).

Students of Isaiah can now sit down and work with the latest word on this wonderful old book. Gray’s work will add to our pleasure if not to our complete satisfaction, for it necessarily leaves many questions to be settled in the future.

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